

CBS EVENING NEWS (TV)  
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# Exercises off Libya Planned

DAN RATHER: CBS News has been told tonight President Reagan is about to escalate his military challenge to Libya's Muammar Qaddafi. State Department correspondent Bill McLaughlin has details.

BILL MCLAUGHLIN: Within the next 48 hours, the aircraft carrier America will steam into the Mediterranean, where it

will join two other aircraft carrier groups led by the Saratoga and the Coral Sea. The carriers are scheduled to engage in what are called routine maneuvers.

But Administration sources tell CBS News there's nothing routine about this unusual and impressive naval gathering. The sources say that the U.S. Navy will ignore what Qaddafi dramatically calls the line of death across the Gulf of Sidra, in effect daring the Libyan strongman to attack the U.S. CBS News has been told that the Reagan Administration hopes Qaddafi does attack; and, in the words of one official, "If and when that happens, we'll clobber him."

Intelligence sources say the U.S. has more than enough justification for a military strike against Libya. The Administration is said to have collected hard evidence proving that Qaddafi is still deeply involved with terrorist groups. Other sources say that Qaddafi is actively involved in new plots against Israeli and American targets.

"In the past we talked," said one official. "This time we are fully prepared to act."